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Recreation.gov Helps Citizens Enjoy America's Natural Treasures

Have you ever wondered where the best biking and rock climbing trails are located, how to make campsite reservations, or how to get specific information about park fees, hours, and directions? With the help of the one-stop Federal recreation Web portal, www.recreation.gov, searching for this type of information has never been easier.

Recreation.gov is an interagency partnership between USDA's Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, and other Federal agencies, aimed at providing a single, easy-to-use resource with information about all Federal recreation areas. One of the original examples of citizen-centered eGovernment, Recreation.gov and its strategy for future enhancements has been integrated into Recreation One-Stop (ROS), one of the 24 Presidential eGovernment Initiatives.

As one of the largest Departments managing public lands in national forests and grasslands, USDA is working closely with ROS' managing partner, the Department of the Interior, to help citizens share and enjoy national forests while conserving the environment for generations to come. USDA has ensured that pertinent and valuable Forest Service information is easily available on Recreation.gov by contributing not only their dedication and commitment, but also financial support and expertise.

As one of the first and longest-running interagency Federal Web sites, many enhancements have been made to Recreation.gov based on citizen feedback and eGovernment advancements. Enhancements made over the past few years in order to improve citizens' access to recreation information and services include the addition of state and local parks and museums to the site; a clickable, map-based interface; links to many state tourism and recreation-oriented Web sites; and direct access to related Federal sites, such as Volunteer.gov and Fitness.gov.

On Recreation.gov, citizens can now view over 2,500 public recreation sites, including not only government recreation facilities but also links to state tourism sites with information about thousands of private attractions and facilities. The site has plans to add thousands of extra facilities as well. Citizens planning a trip will be able to discover which parks, forests, lakes, museums, and other recreation sites are located near a particular area, as well as find which ones offer specific recreational activities, such as fishing and camping. In addition, the public can find the location of recreation sites on maps, obtain

driving directions, make reservations and order passes, and conduct other transactions online.

In addition to the content currently available, ROS is developing a data exchange standard so other Web sites can exchange recreation data seamlessly over the Internet. Streamlining data sharing between Federal, state, tribal, local and non-government organizations will increase the number of Web sites with current, accurate recreation information, such as facility locations, hours of operation, and fees. The data standard will be adopted in late 2003 and will include more specific terms than are displayed on the current site. For example, Recreation.gov now lists only "fishing" as an activity, but various states list a variety of different choices, such as trout fishing, bass fishing, and deep sea fishing. Such subcategories will be developed in detail and included in the site over the next few years.

USDA's representatives for the Recreation One Stop initiative are very pleased with its progress. According to Larry Warren of the Forest Service, USDA's liaison to the ROS initiative, "Recreation One Stop is a winner. All of our partners and collaborators feel this effort is greatly improving access to information about recreation opportunities and services on public lands. The American public wins, government agencies win and private sector business wins. This is what public service is all about."

More information on Recreation One Stop is available at www.recreation.gov. For more information on USDA's involvement, please contact the eGovernment team.

Farm Bill Web Site Designed to Make New Programs & Services Easier for Public to Understand

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-171) —more commonly known as the 2002 Farm Bill—is a major piece of legislation, touching hundreds of programs and virtually every aspect of USDA's mission. With many program and service changes in the bill, the Department has faced the complicated task of communicating these changes to the public. To aid in this effort, the Department set up a citizen-centric Farm Bill 2002 Web site, www.usda.gov/farmbill.

The site, designed to help citizens better understand the legislation and take advantage of its programs, serves as USDA's main source for all information related to the Bill. It is designed to help farmers, ranchers and others locate information through one integrated site rather than searching through a vast number of Web pages located on a variety of different agency sites.

The Farm Bill 2002 site includes Farm Bill program details, questions and answers, program applications and sign-up forms, as well as other important materials from USDA agencies on Farm Bill implementation. Additional site features include a comparison of the provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill with the 1996 Farm Bill, interactive calculators and estimating tools to help farmers compute crop yields and other values. Citizens can search for and access information in multiple ways, including by bill title, by agency, or by subject (conservation, rural services, etc.). Further, users will be able to access specific agency information through the site and easily return to the home page by clicking on the Farm Bill 2002 logo located throughout USDA agencies' Web pages.

The site has been a key outreach initiative for the Department's implementation of the Farm Bill. With some concern about the slow pace of sign-up for many of the Bill's programs, marketing and communications initiatives such as the Web site are key to informing the public of the USDA services now available. Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services J.B. Penn comments on the Department's electronic Farm Bill outreach efforts, "All of us at USDA recognize the importance of the new Farm Bill to America's producers, and we remain fully committed to providing them with all the necessary information and assistance throughout the implementation process."

The USDA Farm Bill 2002 Web site is available at www.usda.gov/farmbill. For more information on the site, or on the eGovernment aspects of the Bill's implementation, please contact the eGovernment Team.

Science.Gov Provides a Wealth of Federal Scientific Information

As science and technology increasingly affect our daily lives, the need for a convenient way to search for scientific information is becoming more and more important. Because of this growing impact, Federal science agencies launched www.science.gov, a one-stop resource for science professionals, students and educators, business people, and other science-oriented citizens to find reliable science and technology information. Science.gov provides facts about common issues such as pest management for gardens and basic health information, as well as more complex issues such as NASA Mars missions and new drug discoveries.

Science.gov contains about 2,000 government science resources, including two major types of information—selected authoritative science Web sites and databases of technical reports, journal articles, conference proceedings, and other published materials. In the spirit of the President's Management Agenda, the site allows users to search for information based on subject rather than by the agency sponsoring it. In addition, some of the links point to interactive services that allow the user to perform activities such as ordering documents or calculating how fast a river is flowing. Science.gov prides itself in the integrity of its information, as sites are selected by agency information managers and librarians, and the site's information is a

product of government-funded research and development.

Science.gov was developed through a voluntary cross-agency effort from 10 major Federal research and technology agencies, including USDA's National Agricultural Library (NAL). These agencies collectively make up the interagency Science.gov Alliance, a group of science-focused departments, agencies and programs that collaboratively volunteered to produce Science.gov. Major support was provided by Cendi (www.dtic.mil/cendi), an interagency committee of senior managers of Federal science and technology information programs. The Science.gov Alliance's membership continues to expand, most recently including the Government Printing Office; additional agencies are currently considering membership as well.

While the Department of Energy manages the Science.gov site, USDA is a major producer and contributor of scientific research, as well as a Science.gov co-chair (along with the Department of the Interior). Underscoring the Department's leadership role, USDA recently increased its involvement with the addition of the Forest Service into the Science.gov Alliance.

Eleanor Frierson, Deputy Director of NAL and co-chair of the Science.gov Alliance, best describes the site's features and benefits: "Science.gov provides the unique ability to search across the content within databases as well as across Web sites." According to Ms. Frierson, "It shows that Federal agencies can work together to pull off something none of them could do individually." Others in the scientific community have equal praise for the site. *Science* magazine states that, "Science.gov makes it easier to round up scientific information that's strewn across the US government's numerous Web sites...instead of glutting the site with all its resources, each agency contributed its most authoritative reports, Web sites, fact sheets, and databases."

In addition to the extensive content currently available on the site, a number of enhancements are planned for the near future to ensure that Science.gov continues to provide the most authoritative, content-rich resources to citizens. Additional Web sites and databases will continue to be added as they are identified by the Alliance members; the section of the site designed to serve children and educators will be expanded as well. The site's search engine will also be reevaluated, and further usability testing is likely.

For more information on USDA's participation in this initiative or for general information, please contact Eleanor Frierson, co-chair of the Science.gov Alliance, at efrierson@nal.usda.gov, or the eGovernment Team.

For more information on any of these topics, or for general comments or questions, contact the eGovernment Team at:

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